

## Base Info

### History of



(This narrative does not cover the History of Pope AFB in its entirety. It does, however, give the reader a little insight into the proud heritage of the base.)

The development of air power during the last century changed the global perspective. Wilbur and Orville Wright accomplished the first sustained powered flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on 17 December 1903. Fifteen years later, bi-planes and observation balloons began using a pea field north of the newly established Army artillery training post at Camp Bragg in 1918 as a landing strip.

Lt Harley Halbert Pope landed his two seater JN-4 "Jenny" at the field on 28 December 1918. Lt Pope and Sgt Walter Flemming mapped air mail routes between Emerson Field at Camp Jackson, South Carolina and Newport News, Virginia. Lt Pope, stationed at Emerson Field knew the terrain with the South Carolina flying area. Sgt Flemming, stationed at Langley Field, Virginia, knew the tidal basin region around Newport News. The field at Camp Bragg was the way point in their flight path. Without electronic navigation aids in the early days of aviation, flyers used topographical resources such as rivers and railroad tracks to aid in their journeys. Lt Pope and Sgt Flemming followed the Atlantic Coastline Railway. The two Army Signal Corps aviators accomplished the first leg of their trip without only minor engine trouble.

The two pilots left Newport News on 1 January 1919 for the return leg. Engine trouble forced them to land the Curtis bi-plane at Weldon, North Carolina. Repairs took almost a week, but they were on their way to Camp Bragg on 7 January 1919. In the twilight of that winter day, civilians living along the Cape Fear River north of Fayetteville, North Carolina heard an airplane and a thunderous crash. The plane broke through the trees along the river and slammed into a stanchion of the Clarendon Bridge. Authorities from Camp Bragg found the plane in the swollen river, but the missing bodies of the airmen were not found for several months.

Members of the deceased Lt Pope's squadron, the 276<sup>th</sup> Aero Squadron, received movement orders to Camp Bragg Flying Field in February 1919. As a memorial to Lt Pope, the War Department officially established the field at Camp Bragg as Pope Field on 5 April 1919. A runway did not exist, just a wide open field surrounded by pine forest.

Observation planes and observation balloons occupied Pope Field for the first eight years. Missions of the planes and balloons ranged from mapping terrain, spotting for artillery, detecting forest fires, and carrying the mail. The airfield consisted of four hangers. The motor pool consisted of three vehicles and four driver mechanics. In 1926, the base commander was a lieutenant in charge of 26 enlisted men.

The airfield gained national prominence in 1927 when Major Carl "Tooey" Spatz conducted bombing tests from the airfield. Major Spatz uses 14 Keystone and Curtis bombers to demolish a bridge 65 miles west of the base on the Pee Dee River. It was the first demonstration of precision aerial bombing. The test demonstrated the use of high explosive aerial bombing to destroy permanent concrete structures increasing the tactical capabilities of the Army Air Corps. General Spatz became the Air Force's first chief of staff in 1947.

In 1928, the entire Army Air Service's fleet of 91 aircraft briefly moved to Pope to conduct joint air and ground attack maneuvers. This was the first maneuver using air support and ground forces to attack a common object. Pope would later host the first USAF Air to Ground Operations School.

The Army Air Service upgraded the base during the 1930's by installing a light system and ground beacon. Flemming Hall, named for the flying sergeant killed in the crash with Lt Pope, opened in 1933 as the headquarters building and barracks. The additions of a dispensary, NCO quarters, officer quarters, and fire station added to the airfield becoming a separate location from Camp Bragg. Flemming Hall, named for the flying sergeant killed in the 1919 crash with Lt Pope rests between Maynard and Virgin Streets. Maynard Street is named for Lt Belvin W. Maynard, a graduate of Wake Forest that gave up the ministry to become a bomber pilot for France in 1917. Virgin Street is named for Lt. H.E. Virgin, a Pope Field pilot killed when his DeHavilland bi-plane crashed into the woods at the edge of the field in 1921.

The construction of a large hangar, dismantled in California and shipped to Pope Field in 1934, allowed the 2<sup>d</sup> Balloon Company to set up operations. The unit had moved from Scott Field, Illinois in 1930 but, due to the shortage of facilities at Pope Field, operated from near the parade field on Camp Bragg. The base fitness center currently occupies the approximate location of the large balloon hangar.

Two large aircraft hangars constructed in 1934 housed base operations. They are now known as building 708 or Hangar Four. The construction of the two hangars raised the total number of hangars to six. In 1935, Pope Field hosted 535 aircraft in one day as the Army Air Service practiced large scale operations along the East Coast. In 1940, paved runways replaced dirt open fields. Much of the parking ramp space remained unpaved until after WWII.

During the 1940's, the base swelled as a troop carrier training site. With the institution of paratrooper training at Camp Bragg, Pope began putting the "Air" in "Airborne". Glider planes used in the D-Day invasion occupy several of the flightline pictures of the era. Various troop carrier groups and squadrons transited through Pope Field as they learned how to conduct paratrooper operations.

With the outbreak of World War II, the tempo of activities at Pope AFB quickened. The 82d Airborne Division moved to Fort Bragg in 1941 and the base developed into major troop carrier training base. Throughout the war, air and ground crews trained here with Army airborne units, such as the 82d, in preparation for airborne and aerial resupply missions. The Fort Bragg drop zones--Sicily, Normandy, Nijmegen, etc.--are ringing reminders of the historic battles for which these units prepared.

After the war, Pope Field became an Air Force Base with the creation of the Air Force on 17 September 1947. The base served as the home of the 10<sup>th</sup> Tactical Reconnaissance Wing from 1947 until 1950, when Head Quarters Ninth Air Force moved to the base. During the next four years, the base primary mission dealt with training Forward Air Controllers for the Korean War. In 1954, HQ Ninth Air Force turned the base over to a troop carrier wing that specialized in tactical airlift.

In October 1954, the 464th Troop Carrier Wing transferred to Pope AFB, and a major period of facility expansion followed. The main runway, the taxiways, and the ramp were all expanded to support the 464 TCW's C-119 Flying Boxcars. One of the more innovative missions of this period was the airdrop of 17 Caterpillar D-4 tractors into remote Arctic locations to be used to prepare ice strips for the Defense Early Warning System (DEW line) sites.

During the 1950s and 1960s aircraft upgrade was the primary trend at the North Carolina installation. The C-123 Provider started replacing the C-119 in 1958, and in 1963 the first C-130 Hercules arrived, appropriately named "The North Carolina." The C-130 is a four-engine

turboprop whose 17-ton payload and ability to operate from short, unimproved strips greatly expanded the wing's capability. This enhancement was soon demonstrated during the 1964 Belgian Congo Airlift, for which the 464th received the Mackay Trophy for "the most meritorious flight of the year."

As America became involved in Vietnam, the need to train large numbers of aircrews to fully use the unique capabilities of the C-130 led to the establishment of an aircrew replacement training unit. The drop zones, low-level routes, and dirt landing zones at Fort Bragg became familiar to many men bound for Southeast Asia. The training gained in operating in the North Carolina area immeasurably improved aircrew preparedness for combat duty.

In August 1971, the 464th inactivated and the 317th Military Airlift Wing administratively moved to Pope AFB. The move kept alive the name and colors of one of the most senior airlift units whose combat record was pre-eminent in the Air Force.

One of the most important roles of the 317th in recent years was its involvement in the development and testing of the sophisticated Adverse Weather Aerial Delivery System which allows accurate airdrops through cloud cover and at night, thereby greatly expanding the environment in which airborne operations are possible. This system proved its worth in combat during Vietnam, and the 23rd Wing, now at Pope, is still one of two fully equipped AWADS units in the Air Force.

On October 25, 1983, the 317th took part in the invasion of Grenada. Just before dawn, 18 Pope C-130s airdropped and airlanded elite Army Rangers onto the 10,000-foot, Cuban-built runway at Point Salines, Grenada. Pope AFB airplanes, and air and ground crews provided the bulk of the Air Force effort in Grenada. The base served as the primary staging site for the operation code-named URGENT FURY. More than 650 Pope people deployed to the nearby Caribbean island of Barbados to establish a forward operating base and continuous tactical airlift shuttle service to the island. Operation URGENT FURY rescued about 700 American medical students and returned to the people of Grenada their freedom.

On a daily basis the personnel of the 317th flew people, equipment, and supplies all over the world to support the far-reaching military obligations of the United States. The wing also took part in numerous Joint Chiefs of Staff exercises to develop and refine the skills required to respond rapidly to any contingency. In addition, the wing was often involved in humanitarian disaster relief and emergency evacuation of American nationals from troubled areas of the world. Some of these such operations were the relief missions to the snow bound Northeast during the winter of 1977, assistance to the residents of the Caribbean whose homes were ravaged by hurricanes "David" and "Frederick," and the 1979 evacuation of personnel from Iran.

In March 1984, Pope AFB sent help to disaster victims in its own backyard. When killer tornadoes struck throughout southern North Carolina, the base sent more than 200 volunteers to assist with clearing efforts; provide communications and medical assistance; distribute food, water, tents and clothing; and direct traffic. When Hurricane Hugo devastated the southern states in the Fall of 1989, the 317th, barely missed by Hugo as it passed, once again responded to help those in need.

Pope Air Force Base hosted the filming of comedian Bob Hope's U.S. Air Force birthday special in May 1987, highlighted by a visit from President Ronald Reagan. That event, followed by the annual Military Airlift Command competition called "Airlift Rodeo", brought more than 30,000 visitors to the base.

In March 1988, the 317th Airlift Wing and Pope AFB supported the emergency deployment of the 82nd Airborne Division, from Fort Bragg, to Honduras to counter a military threat to that nation. Within 18 hours of the Presidential decision to deploy forces, the wing loaded nearly 2,000 troops

and 259 tons of cargo and equipment on C-141 Starlifter aircraft and launched them to Central America.

In December 1989, the 317th participated in military actions General Manuel Noriega and his Panamanian Defense Forces. When President Reagan decided to deploy troops, the 317th led the airborne assault by transporting and airdropping members 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment on the Panamanian defense force base at Rio Hato in the initial hours of Operation JUST CAUSE. Following the initial surge, Pope continued to play a key role in this operation as a major support base by completing 100 resupply missions, and transporting 2,300 additional tons of cargo and 2,800 passengers. The base also supported the redeployment of the 82nd Airborne Division troopers on 13 January 1990, as well as the aeromedical airlift of those soldiers wounded in the operation. Nearly all of the 5,223 military and civilian employees at Pope AFB participated in or supported Operation JUST CAUSE.

Less than a year later, when Saddam Hussien's Iraqi Army invaded the neighboring Persian Gulf country of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the tactical airlifters at Pope responded by deploying to South West Asia on 8 August 1990. During Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, the 317th transported more than 40,000 combat troops and nearly 65 million pounds of cargo into the Arabian Peninsula. Deployed wing personnel and aircraft flew thousands of missions, repositioning and resupplying those troops during the course of the operation to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. Tactical airlifters from Pope AFB played a major role in General Norman Swartzkopf's famous end around maneuver.

Pope AFB underwent a major change 1 June 1992, as the 23rd Wing "Flying Tigers" activated under the new Air Combat Command. The Wing consisted of the 74th Fighter Squadron which flew F-16 C/D Viper forward air control aircraft, the 75th Fighter Squadron, with A/OA-10 Thunderbolt II close air support aircraft, and the 2nd and 41st Airlift Squadrons, which flew the C-130E Hercules. The activation of the 23rd as a composite wing at Pope began a new era of support for Fort Bragg's XVIII Airborne Corps and 82nd Airborne Division. Pope continued to be the center for global mobility of America's fighting forces, with personnel and equipment supporting operations in Somalia, Southwest Asia, and the Balkans.

In April 1997 Pope once again saw changes that involved streamlining all stateside airlift operations under Air Mobility Command--including C-130s. The changes resulted in the activation of the 43d Airlift Wing as the host wing at Pope AFB under the Air Mobility Command, and put the A-10s under the 23rd Fighter Group as an Air Combat Command unit, a tenant at the base.

Team Pope remains the Air Force's supreme tactical team for joint operations. The 43d Airlift Wing, Best Joint Airdrop Inspection Team, Best C-130 Wing received recognition at AMC Rodeo 2000 as the world's best Airdrop Wing, , Best Joint Airdrop Inspection Team, Best C-130 Wing. Teamed with tenant Air Combat Command units, Air Force Special Operation Units, the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps, and elements of the US Special Operations Command. The 43 AW provides rapid global mobility and agile combat support to a joint team capable of global attack and precision engagement. In October 1999, the 43 AW served as the Air Force's first lead mobility wing, on call to respond to global humanitarian airlift missions.

### **History of the 43d Airlift Wing**

(This narrative does not cover the History of the 43d Airlift Wing in its entirety. It does, however, give the reader a little insight into the proud heritage of the wing.)

Assigned to the Twenty First Air Force and the Air Mobility Command, the 43d Airlift Wing began a new chapter in its history when it activated at Pope AFB, North Carolina, on 1 April 1997. The wing operates two squadrons of C-130 Hercules. Capable of deploying a self-sustaining war

fighting package anywhere in the world at a moment's notice, the 43d teamed with the United States Army's major elements of nearby Fort Bragg to form the United States' premiere forced entry capability. To carry out these missions, the wing employed two operational squadrons--the 2nd and 41st Airlift Squadrons--flying the C-130 "Hercules" aircraft. Recognized as the workhorse of the Air Force airlift fleet, the C-130 is capable of delivering troops, supplies and equipment directly to the battlefield in all weather conditions. It can also provide theater airlift for other contingencies and humanitarian missions around the world.

Commanded by Brigadier General Winfield Scott III, the 43 AW consists of four groups: the 43d Operations Group; the 43d Logistics Group; the 43d Support Group; and the 43d Medical Group.

Like most current wings, the 43d Airlift Wing also maintains an important link to a similarly numbered group prior to 1947. When the Air Force transitioned to the wing concept, the groups came under the command of the new wings. Eventually, the USAF removed groups and assigned the flying squadrons directly to the parent wing. A committee appointed by Headquarters USAF in 1954 recommended that groups and wings be maintained as separate and distinct organizations, and that the histories and honors of the groups be temporarily bestowed upon the similarly numbered wings. Thus, the 43 AW, whenever it serves on active status, carries with it the history and honors of the 43d Bombardment Group--now known as the 43d Operations Group. (Should the 43 OG serve under another wing, the group maintains its history and honors--not the 43 AW.)

Activated as the 43d Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 15 January 1941, the 43d trained at Langley Field, Virginia, for its early antisubmarine mission. The group moved in August 1941 to Dow Field, Maine. There, the 43d flew A-29, B-17, B-18, B-24, and B-25 aircraft on antisubmarine patrols along the Atlantic coastline, including missions from Langley Field Virginia; McDill Field, Florida; and Pope Field, North Carolina. The group continued in this role until shortly after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

With the outbreak of war in the Pacific, the 43d found itself on the move. The group departed Dow Field in B-17s on 18 February 1942 and arrived in Sydney, Australia, on 28 March. After its arrival, the group began flying bombing missions over Japanese-held territories and against enemy ship convoys. During these missions the group became highly decorated, earning two Distinguished Unit Citations and producing two Medal of Honor winners.

The group earned its first Distinguished Unit Citation when Japanese forces began an advance towards the allied stronghold at Port Moresby, Papua, in 1942. Bombers from the 43d attacked Japanese shipyards, airfields, and supply routes on the other side of the island nation. These missions kept enemy reinforcements and needed supplies away from the front lines, destroying the Japanese's ability to wage war. After they were driven from Papua, the Japanese tried to establish a new stronghold in the region.

On 2 March 1943, reconnaissance aircraft detected a large Japanese convoy steaming towards New Guinea. After developing a new bombing technique called "skip bombing," the 43d Bomb Group attacked the convoy. The group destroyed all of the transport ships and several escort vessels, resulting in a major allied victory. In recognition of this achievement, the 43d earned their second Distinguished Unit Citation. This battle demonstrated what the group as a whole could do, but three months later a little-known air battle tested how the individuals in the 43d reacted under the stress of battle.

Captain Jay Zeamer, Jr. piloted a B-17 on a reconnaissance mission over the Solomon Islands on 16 June 1943. As the mission neared completion, the aircraft came under heavy attack by more than 20 Japanese fighters. During the ensuing battle, Zeamer and the bombardier, Lieutenant Joseph R. Sarnoski, were seriously wounded. Despite their injuries, both officers performed heroically. Sarnoski continued to fend off repeated attacks by the interceptors until he died at his

post. Zeamer managed to lose the assailants and land the aircraft safely at an allied airfield 500 miles away. Both men were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions.

As the United States began to push the Japanese back, the Air Corps discovered the value of low level bombing in the Southwest Pacific. Because of this, the group switched to B-24 bombers in the summer and fall of 1943. The group's B-24s continued bombing Japanese forces in support of amphibious landings throughout the theater. As allied forces advanced, the group eventually focused on destroying strategic targets in Japan. The 43d sustained its strategic bombing efforts until the Japanese surrendered in September 1945. With the war over and the Asiatic Pacific Theater secure, the group inactivated on 29 April 1946.

First organized as the 43d Bombardment Wing, Very Heavy, on 17 November 1947, the new unit trained in strategic bombing with B-29 bombers at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. Under the leadership of Colonel James C. Selser, Jr., the wing received the first B-50 aircraft in the USAF inventory in 1948. A year later, the unit expanded its mission to include air refueling and added KB-29s to its roster. Aircrews from the 43d set records with all three aircraft.

On 22 July 1948, three B-29s set out from Davis-Monthan AFB on a planned 14-day trip around the world. The crash of one B-29 delayed the trip one day, but the remaining aircraft completed the trip in a record 15 days. The 20,000-mile flight required eight stops along the way and took 103 hours, 50 minutes of flying time to complete. Though impressive for the day, the 43d accomplished a greater feat the next year.

On 26 February 1949, Captain James Gallagher commanded the B-50A Lucky Lady II as its crew of 14 departed on another record breaking flight. Refueled four times by KB-29s from the 43d Air Refueling Squadron, the Lucky Lady II completed the first non-stop flight around the world. This 94-hour, one-minute mission demonstrated the effectiveness of air refueling to the world. As a result of this accomplishment, the crew won the Mackay Trophy and the Air Age Trophy.

The wing continued its strategic bombing and air refueling missions into the 1950s. Always in the lead, 43d crews in two KB-29s earned the first combat sortie credits for tankers when they refueled an RF-80 over Korea on 28 September 1951. Two years later the wing replaced the KB-29s with KC-97s. In 1953 the wing transitioned into the jet age with the replacement of B-50s with B-47s. A 43d crew did not wait long to set records with the new Stratojet.

On 17 November 1954, Colonel David A. Burchinal, 43d Bomb Wing Commander, took off from Sidi Slimane, Morocco, in his B-47. Colonel Burchinal planned to join up with the rest of the 43d on a training rotation at Fairford RAF Station, England. As he approached the English base, Colonel Burchinal encountered inclement weather, which prevented his landing. The B-47 flew back to Sidi Slimane and discovered bad weather there, too. With no other options, the B-47 crew arranged for air refuelings until the weather cleared up at one of the locations. After nine inflight refuelings and 47 hours 35 minutes in the air, the Stratojet was able to land at Fairford RAF Station. During its time aloft, the bomber traveled 21,163 miles and shattered the previous jet endurance record. Recognizing the 43d Bomb Wing's history of record breaking and firsts, the Strategic Air Command (SAC) selected the 43d to fly the command's newest bomber, the B-58.

Its transition to B-58 Hustlers required the wing to move to Carswell Air Force Base, Texas, in March 1960. The 43d received the first B-58 in the Air Force on 1 August of that year. After the wing added the Hustler to its inventory, it conducted Category II and III evaluations with the new bomber. The 43d also operated a school to train SAC aircrews in the B-58. Once they began flying, it did not take 43d aircrews long to start setting records with supersonic bomber.

On 12 January 1961, Major Henry J. Deutschendorf commanded a B-58 crew from the 43d that set out to break six flight records; five of which the Soviet Union held. The Hustler flew two laps around a course with Edwards AFB, California, at one end and Yuma, Arizona, at the other. The

bomber set three speed records over the 1000 kilometer (km) course with a 2000 kilogram (kg), 1000 kg, and 0 kg payload--averaging 1,200.194 miles per hour (mph) in each category. The crew managed an average speed of 1,061.88 mph in each of the same payload categories over the 2000 km course. This flight set the pace for the 43d with the B-58.

Crews broke two more flight records with their Hustlers in 1961. On 10 May 1961, Major Elmer E. Murphy flew his Hustler 669.4 miles in 30 minutes 45 seconds. Averaging 1,302 mph, Major Murphy set a new record for sustained speed and earned France's Bleriot Cup. Sixteen days later a Hustler flew from New York City to Paris, France in 3 hours, 19 minutes, and 41 seconds. The B-58 averaged 1,089 mph along the 4,612 mile course and completed in 1/10th the time it took Charles Lindbergh in 1927. This transatlantic flight earned the crew the seventh Mackay Trophy and the Harmon International Trophy. Tragically, the crew was killed when their B-58 crashed on 3 June at the Paris Air Show. Though saddened by the loss, crews from the 43d continued to set records with the Hustler.

Captain Robert G. Sowers piloted a B-58 that set out to break three speed records on 5 March 1962. Referred to as Operation Heat Rise, the 43d Bomb Wing B-58 flew from New York to Los Angeles and back to New York in 4 hours, 41 minutes, and 14.98 seconds. The crew took the bomber from New York to Los Angeles in two hours, 15 minutes, and 50.8 seconds--beating the sun across the United States. The return trip took 2 hours and 58.71 seconds, averaging 1,214.65 mph. All three crewmen earned the Mackay Trophy, the Bendix Trophy, Distinguished Flying Crosses, and congratulations from President John F. Kennedy.

One of the last things the wing did while at Carswell AFB took place on 28 March 1964, the day after a major earthquake devastated Alaska. Headquarters USAF tasked the 43d to provide it with photographs of the region hit by the quake. Members of the 43d flew two B-58s the 5,751 miles to Alaska and back, processed the film, and then delivered the pictures to Washington DC 14.5 hours after the wing received the request. Six months later the 43d Bomb Wing moved to Little Rock AFB, Arkansas. There it added KC-135 refuelers to its inventory. The 43d Bombardment Wing carried out its mission of strategic bombardment readiness and air refueling for five and a half years at Little Rock AFB. In mid-1969, the Air Force began to retire the B-58s. While the majority of the wing's bombers went to Davis-Monthan AFB for storage, the Air Force spared one. Aircraft 59-2458, the Hustler that flew the record breaking round trip flight from New York to Los Angeles, was placed on display at the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. Shortly after the retirement of its last B-58, the 43d Bombardment Wing inactivated in January 1970. However, the wing did not stay idle long.

Activated on 1 April 1970 at Andersen AFB, Guam, the 43d Strategic Wing assumed a combat role with B-52 bombers and KC-135 refuelers. The wing began with only light participation in SAC's Arc Light bombing campaign against North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam. The wing's participation in Arc Light ceased when SAC made the 43d Strategic Wing part of its worldwide nuclear alert force in August 1971.

The 43d stayed out of Vietnam until early 1972. In response to increased aggression by the North, SAC initiated Operation Bullet Shot. Bullet Shot resulted in the build up of B-52 forces at Andersen AFB to carry out increased bombing missions. At the peak of the operation, 150 B-52s operated as part of the 43d, making it the largest unit in the USAF. These bombers participated in bombing raids against enemy targets all over Vietnam, including north of the demilitarized zone, until President Richard M. Nixon ordered a cessation to the aggressive bombing efforts. President Nixon gave that order when it appeared that the Paris Peace Talks were resulting in a possible agreement. However, when the communist forces took advantage of the bombing halt by increasing their operations tempo, President Nixon gave the order to execute Linebacker II.

Linebacker II involved the heavy application of air power against North Vietnamese supply routes to convince North Vietnam to return to the negotiating table. On 18 December 1972, the 43d

kicked off the 11-day offensive when it launched 33 B-52s against an airfield north of Hanoi. In all, the 43d flew 170 sorties during Linebacker II. The success of the operation was not without cost to the wing. The 43d lost two B-52s and four others received damage as a result of surface-to-air missiles.

North Vietnam and the United States signed a cease-fire agreement on 28 January 1973. Though missions over Vietnam ended, the 43d's combat role continued. At the request of the Royal Laotian Government, the 43d bombed communist insurgents throughout Northern and Southern Laos. On 22 February the Pathet Lao agreed to a cease-fire with the Laotian government, officially ending the wing's combat role in that country. However, one other government in Southeast Asia requested military assistance from the United States.

In early 1973 the Khmer Rouge increased its efforts to take control of Cambodia. At the request of that country's government, B-52s from Guam bombed enemy strongholds throughout Southeast Cambodia. These actions continued over the next six months until President Nixon ordered a cease to US military action in Southeast Asia after 15 August 1973. On 11 August, 16 B-52s carried out the last bombing raids of the 43d to date.

With the official end of combat operations in Southeast Asia, the 43d switched from a conventional bombing mission to one of peacetime nuclear deterrence. During the period after the war the wing provided humanitarian assistance to Vietnamese refugees on two separate occasions in 1974 and 1978. In 1976, the wing conducted low level show-of-force missions over the Republic of Korea after North Korea murdered two US Army officers in Panmunjon. In 1977 the 43d added a conventional mission to its post-Vietnam strategic operation. From that point on, the wing trained its aircrews in sea surveillance, aerial mine laying, and anti-ship warfare.

The 43d Strategic Wing evolved with the changing world order in the 1980's. In 1983 the wing replaced its B-52Ds with B-52Gs. With the upgraded bombers the wing accepted its first Harpoon anti-ship missile, the second US Air Force unit to do so. In 1986, SAC redesignated the 43d Strategic Wing to the 43d Bombardment Wing.

With the name change the wing began a transition from a nuclear alert unit to SAC's lead contingency wing. The wing officially traded in its nuclear mission for its direct action role in October 1988. Two years later, President George H. W. Bush signed an executive order directing the inactivation of the 43d, which it did in September 1990. With the deactivation of the Strategic Air Command 1 June 1992, Malmstrom AFB, Montana became an Air Mobility Command base. The 301st Missile Wing was renamed the 43rd Air Refueling Wing (ARW) and reported to 15th Air Force. With its KC-135Rs, the 43d provided air refueling support to US and allied forces around the world. The 43d supported Operations SOUTHERN WATCH (Saudi Arabia), PROVIDE COMFORT (Turkey), DENY FLIGHT (Bosnia-Herzegovina), UPHOLD DEMOCRACY (Haiti), and SUPPORT HOPE (Rwanda).

The 341st Missile Wing assumed host unit responsibilities from the 43 ARW 1 July 1994. Under a restructuring move the 43rd ARW was redesignated as the 43rd Air Refueling Group when part of the elements 43rd ARW moved to Fairchild AFB, WA.

Downsized and redesignated as the 43d Air Refueling Group, the 43d continued to provide global reach for America. In early 1996, the 43d began the process of closing its operations at Malmstrom AFB. By September, only a small detachment of personnel remained at the Montana installation. All of the organization's aircraft transferred to other USAF locations, including MacDill AFB, Florida. On 30 September 1996, the 43d once again cased its flag during inactivation ceremonies.

Moving to new surroundings and flying a different weapon system seemed constant throughout the years of service for the 43d. On 1 April 1997, the wing once again came to life when AMC activated and redesignated it as the 43d Airlift Wing, flying the C-130 and calling Pope AFB its



new home. The 43 AW assumed its assets from the previous host of Pope AFB, the 23d Wing. The Air Combat Command redesignated the 23d as the 23d Fighter Group the same day and relinquished its host unit responsibilities of Pope AFB to the 43 AW.

Since the wing's reactivation at Pope AFB on 1 April 1997, the wing has continued a high level of performance. Personnel from the 43 AW participated in Operations Operations ALLIED FORCE, SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, DESERT STORM, DESERT CALM, JOINT GUARDIAN, JOINT FORGE, NOBLE ANVIL, ATLAS RESPONSE, and CONSTANT VIGIL. In addition the 43 AW continued to support exercises and deployments of the 23d Fighter Group with maintenance and support personnel.

In order to rapidly deploy powerful aerospace forces anywhere on the globe the Air Force employed the Expeditionary Aerospace Forces contingency and deployment management concept. Due to past performance and the experienced leadership of "Team Pope," the 43 AW led as the first LMW based on being the only tactical airlift wing with an eye for Humanitarian Relief Operation employment execution.

Hosting Air Mobility Rodeo 2000, General Charles T. "Tony" Robertson, cited the event as "the best Rodeo ever!" The 43 AW won honors as the World's Best C-130/C-160 Wing, and World's Best Airdrop Wing.

### **43d Airlift Wing Lineage and Honors**

#### **LINEAGE**

**Established as 43d Bombardment Wing, Very Heavy** 3 Nov 1947

Organized 17 Nov 1947  
Discontinued 1 Aug 1948

**Redesignated as 43d Bombardment Wing, Medium** 1 Aug 1948

- Activated 1 Aug 1948
- Inactivated 31 Jan 1970

**Redesignated as 43d Strategic Wing** 4 Feb 1970

- Activated 1 Apr 1970

**Redesignated as 43d Bombardment Wing, Heavy** 4 Nov 1986

- Inactivated 30 Sep 1990

**Activated as 43d Air Refueling Wing** 1 Jun 1992

**Redesignated as 43d Air Refueling Group** 1 Jul 1994

- Inactivated 30 Sep 1996

**Redesignated as 43d Airlift Wing** 1 Apr 1997

- Activated 1 Apr 1997

#### **HONORS**

**Campaigns:** World War II: Antisubmarine, American Theater; Air Offensive, Japan; China Defensive, Papua, Guadalcanal, New Guinea; Northern Solomons; Bismarck Archipelago;

Western Pacific; Leyte; Luzon; Southern Philippines; China Offensive; Ryukyus. Vietnam War:  
Southwest Monsoon; Commando Hunt VII; Vietnam Ceasefire.

### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations:

Papua, [August] 1942-23 January 1943  
Bismarck Sea, 2-4 March 1943

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm:

1 April 1970 - 28 January 1973

### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" device:**

1 April 1972 - 28 January 1973  
29 January - 15 November 1973

### **Air Force Outstanding Unit Award**

1 August 1960 - 1 August 1962  
1 May 1975 - 30 April 1977  
1 July 1984 - 30 June 1985  
1 July 1985 - 30 June 1986  
1 July 1991 - 30 June 1993  
1 July 1994 - 30 June 1996

(\* As long as the 43d Operations Group is assigned to the 43d Airlift Wing, or if the group is inactivated, the 43 AW is entitled to honors earned by the group prior to 17 November 1947.)

## **FACT SHEET**

### **43rd Airlift Wing**

The 43rd Airlift Wing was reactivated at Pope AFB, N.C., April 1, 1997. The wing operates two squadrons of C-130 Hercules. It is part of 21st Air Force, McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., and Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

Pope Air Force Base helps provide the Rapid Global Mobility of the United States Air Force - one of the service's six core competencies outlined in "Global Engagement: A Vision for the Twenty-First-Century Air Force." It is capable of deploying a self-sustaining war fighting package anywhere in the world at a moment's notice, to form our nation's premiere forced entry capability with the United States Army. It can also provide theater airlift for other contingencies and humanitarian missions around the world such as Operation Joint Endeavour in Bosnia or Operation Southern Watch in Southwest Asia.

To carry out these missions, the wing has two operational squadrons assigned — the 2nd and 41st Airlift Squadrons -- flying C-130s. The C-130 is recognized as the workhorse of the Air Force airlift fleet, capable of delivering troops, supplies and equipment directly to the battlefield in all weather conditions.

### ***43rd Bombardment Group (Heavy)***

The 43rd Airlift Wing has a rich and illustrious history. The wing traces its roots back to the 43rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), which was constituted Nov. 20, 1940, and activated Jan. 15, 1941, at Langley Field, Va., a little more than a month after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The wing first began training and flying some antisubmarine patrols along the New England coast with B-17, B-18, A-29 and LB-30 aircraft. In February 1942, it moved to the southwest Pacific and was assigned to Fifth Air Force, where it would operate from August 1942 to Nov. 1944. First equipped with B-17s and later converting to the B-24 in mid-1943, the 43rd operated from bases in Australia, New Guinea and Owi Island, making numerous attacks on Japanese shipping in the Netherlands East Indies and the Bismarck Archipelago.

The group also experimented with skip bombing during this time and used this method for some shipping strikes, including attacks on Japanese vessels during the Battle of the Bismarck Sea March 2-4, 1943, in which repeated air attacks destroyed a large enemy convoy carrying reinforcements to New Guinea.

Other operations in this period included support for ground forces on New Guinea; attacks on airfields and installations in New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago, Celebes, Halmahera, Yap, Palau and the southern Philippines; and long-range raids against oil refineries on Ceram and Borneo. The group earned three Distinguished Unit Citations during these operations.

In addition to unit citations, Capt. Jay Zeamer Jr., pilot, and 2nd Lt. Joseph R. Sarnoski, bombardier, each won the Medal of Honor for action while on a photographic mapping mission over the Solomon Islands June 16, 1943. When the mission was nearly completed their aircraft was assaulted by about 20 interceptors. Although painfully wounded, Sarnoski remained at the nose guns and fired at the enemy until he died at his post. Sustaining severe injuries, Zeamer maneuvered the plane until the enemy had broken combat, then directed the flight to a base more than 500 miles away.

After moving to the Philippines in November 1944, the group attacked shipping along the Asiatic coast; struck industries, airfields and installations in China and Formosa; and supported ground forces on Luzon. For actions during this short period, the group earned the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation. It then moved to Ie Shima in July 1945 and conducted missions against airfields and railways in Japan and against shipping in the Inland Sea and the Sea of Japan. The group returned to the Philippines in December 1945 and was inactivated April 29, 1946.

### ***Reactivations/redesignations***

The unit was reactivated Oct. 1, 1946, at Davis-Monthan Field, Ariz., as the 43rd Bombardment Group (Very Heavy), where it would become one of Strategic Air Command's first-line strategic bombardment wings for the next 13 years, including aerial refueling as part of its mission for all but the first two years. The group was redesignated as a wing Nov. 7, 1947. In addition, from November 1947 through December 1948, the unit served as a double-sized wing controlling the tactical and support components from another SAC wing. In July 1948, the unit was redesignated as the 43rd Bombardment Wing (Medium)

Equipped first with B-29s, then with B-50s, and later to B-47 bombers, and from B-29 to KB-29 to KC-97 to KC-135 tankers, the wing trained, conducted long-range test missions and set new flight records, including: flying two B-29s around the world in 1948 in 15 days; the first nonstop flight around the world in 94 hours and 40 seconds in 1949 in "Lucky Lady II," a B-50 commanded by Capt. James G. Gallagher, for which the group earned the Mackay Trophy; and establishing a jet endurance record in 1954 by keeping a B-47 airborne for 47 hours and 35 minutes.

In 1960 the wing converted to B-58 aircraft, then still in its evaluation stage. From March 1960 to July 1961, the wing participated in Category II and III evaluation of the new bomber, operating YRB-58, TB-58, B-58 and TF-102 aircraft, while at the same time operating a combat crew training school for SAC aircrews in the B-58 weapons system.

After July 1961, the wing continued further B-58 evaluations until June 1962. From then until the close of 1969 the wing served as one of two SAC B-58 wings with a strategic bombardment mission. Additionally, from August 1964 until its inactivation in January 1970, the wing controlled a KC-135 refueling squadron.

### ***Setting new records***

During the 1960s, the wing continued to set new records for flight. On Jan. 12, 1961, members of the wing flew a B-58 on a 2,000-kilometer course at an average speed of 1,061.68 mph and a 1,000-kilometer course at an average speed of 1,200.194 mph. Two days later another B-58 averaged 1,284.73 mph on a 1,000-kilometer course, and the crew was awarded the Thompson Trophy.

In May 1961 a wing B-58 flew a closed course of 669.438 miles at 1,302.048 mph, and its crew was awarded the Bleriot Trophy. That same month a B-58 flew from New York City to Paris in three hours, 14 minutes, and 44.53 seconds, establishing a new transatlantic speed record. The flight averaged 1,089.36 mph. The crew subsequently received both the Mackay and Harmon International Trophies.

During a race in 1962 a wing B-58 flew from Los Angeles to New York City at an average speed of 1,214.65 mph, from New York City to Los Angeles at an average speed of 1,081.8 mph, and from Los Angeles to New York and back in four hours, 41 minutes, and 14.91 seconds, at an average of 1,044.46 mph. The Bendix Trophy was awarded to the crew in 1962 and the Mackay Trophy in 1963.

### ***Return to the Pacific***

The wing was inactive for approximately two months in 1970 as it moved to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, and reactivated as the 43rd Strategic Wing in April, serving its first two months there as a base support organization. On July 1, 1970, the 43rd once again assumed a combat role, using attached aircrews and aircraft to participate in SAC's Arc Light mission in Southeast Asia until mid-August.

Thereafter, until February 1972, the wing used its attached resources to provide ground alert at Andersen Air Force Base for quick response, if and when needed. From February 1972 until August 1973, the wing again was engaged in the Southeast Asia conflict, and from July 1972 to November 1973, all of its base and support components were temporarily under control of other organizations, permitting the 43rd to concentrate on its combat mission. Combat operations ceased in Vietnam in January 1973, and in Cambodia in mid-August 1973.

By early 1974, the wing was back on a peacetime footing, providing routine training and ground alert with B-52 and KC-135 aircraft, the latter provided by other SAC organizations on loan. During 1975, the 43rd Wing provided logistical and medical support for many thousands of Vietnam refugees who were evacuated from their homeland and were temporarily at Guam awaiting resettlement.

Since 1974, the wing trained to remain proficient in strategic and conventional warfare capabilities. It also controlled temporarily assigned tankers and crews participating in the Pacific (formerly Andersen) Tanker Task Force that supported SAC operations in the western Pacific, tactical fighter ferry movements and air refueling, and other training requirements. In July 1986 the wing activated the 65th Strategic Squadron to control the temporary duty air refueling forces and the wing returned to a bombardment designation in November 1986.

### ***Back to the states***

In September 1990, the wing was once again inactivated. It then moved to Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont., where it was reactivated and redesignated as the 43rd Air Refueling Wing in June 1992. In July 1994, the wing was once again designated as a group, which became a tenant unit at Malmstrom under Air Mobility Command. In October 1996, the 43rd inactivated when its tanker aircraft were moved to MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. Soon after, the 43rd was reactivated and redesignated as an airlift wing at Pope Air Force Base after the Air Force announced the realignment of stateside C-130s from Air Combat Command to Air Mobility Command.